THE

Queer Side of Landlordism

BY J. F SULLIVAN

I. A Visit to Sir Ogre de Covetous.
II. Sir Ogre's Estate.

(With Seventeen Illustrations by the Author.)

REPRINTED BY SPECIAL PERMISSION OF GEORGE NEWNES, ESQ., M.P., FROM THE *Strand Magazine* (OCTOBER, 1891 AND JANUARY, 1892).

LONDON:
ENGLISH LAND RESTORATION LEAGUE,
8 DUKE STREET, ADELPHI, W.C.
1892.

ONE PENNY.

Printed by Feilden, McAllan & Co., Ltd., 52 Gray's Inn Road, W.C.

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PART I.—*The Queer Side of Landlordism.*

BY J. F. SULLIVAN.

IT WAS, on a certain Morning lately, filled with most pleasing Reflexions, seeing that I was to pass away a Day or two on a Visit to a most worthy Friend of mine, Sir Ogre de Covetous, that had a fine Estate upon the River Thames. This gave me the more Satisfaction because my Friend, besides being a Man of no small Parts in the Preservation of his Rights, had made himself of no inconsiderable Repute among the surrounding humbler Inhabitants of the Locality, and even among such of the Public as chanced to pass by his Estates upon the River.

I came upon my old Friend, as genial as ever, he having been engaged in a rough Discourse with a Cottager that lived hard by his Estates, and scowling hugely.

"You are to know," said the good old Man, turning to me, "that yonder is a most ill-grained and complaining Fellow, for the only Road to his Cottage is one that passes between some Fields of mine; and he has the Effrontery not only to beg that I shall permit his Supply of Coals to pass that Way (which, indeed, would cause me no Inconvenience whatever), but is positively so perverse as to be put out at my refusing, vowing that he must needs quit his Cottage, being unable to live without Firing! As if this were any Concern of mine!" And at this the good old Man fell to fuming and to stamping his Foot; and, perceiving that such Subjects gave him no small Disquietude, I encouraged him to speak upon them at more Length; and with so great Success that he presently addressed to me the following Discourse:

"The People about here," said he, "are, I warrant you, of a very ill Grain, and very hardly to be brought to Reason, being most mightily discontented with all I do; and you must learn that the Public are no better, being not polite enough to understand how a wise Providence has only created the Poor and the Public that they may minister to the Pleasures of Men of an Estate, particularly of an Estate upon the River; a rightful Understanding of which Fact, Sir, would surely induce a more pleasing Intercourse between myself and those around me. I myself am a Man of a most worthy Disposition, and devote my whole Thoughts to the safeguarding and furtherance of my own Interests.

"For one Instance, Sir, we now stand

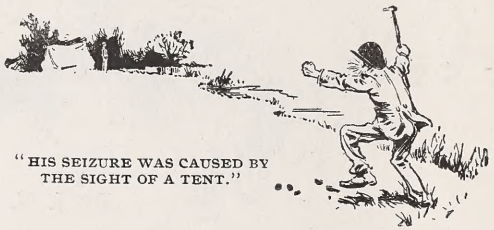
upon the Tow-path, which the Thames Conservancy pay me a yearly Hire for the Use of, 'for the purpose of towing Boats'; and I am of so amiable a Temperament that, I would have you know, I stand constantly at one of my Windows with a Telescope to spy if any should walk along this Path without towing a Boat, in which Case I presently send a man to warn them off; and this, Sir, is one of my chiefest Occupations and Delights."

"I SEND A MAN TO WARN THEM OFF."

And here I could not but observe how a certain Fellow that passed us in a Boat scowled most lustily (yet not without a certain fear) at my good friend the Riverside Proprietor; and I was about speculating upon this Occurrence, when the good old Man continued:—

"There goes, Sir, a Villain of a most froward Temper; for he is by Trade a Waterman; and although I have forbidden him to ferry anybody over to my side of the River, or to fix his Punt in the Stream (for the Bed of the River is my property), and have, indeed, done all in my Power to prevent his gaining a Subsistence; yet I can in no way please him, but he regards me with a most huge disfavour! and, Sir, 'tis the same with the rest of the Watermen here."

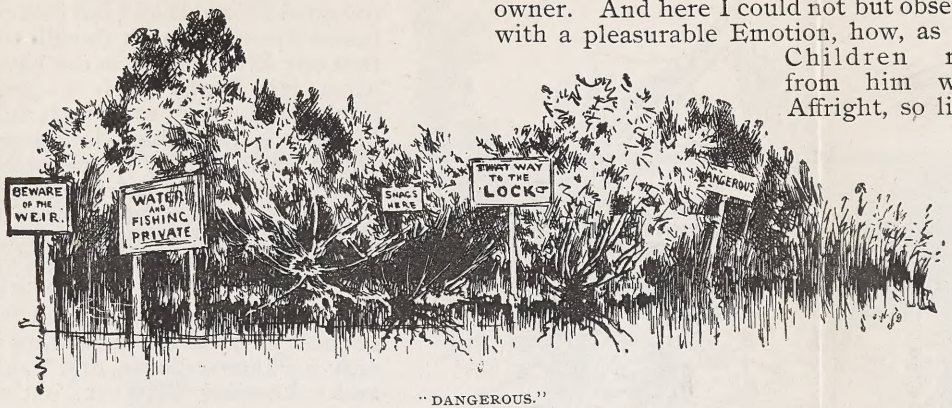
It was with difficulty, at this part of the Discourse, that I could refrain from a Tear upon reflecting how so good a Proprietor should be thus maltreated by all around him; and indeed I could well have cried out upon them all for monstrous, ungrateful Varlets. And observing at this time that my good old Friend was taken with a Fit of the Jumps, so that he called out most vociferously, stamping his Foot the while, I then perceived that his Seizure was occasioned by the Sight of a Tent, which some impertinent Fellow had set up upon his Bank of the Flood; and I learned that such a sight would always bring about in him such a Taking on.



"HIS SEIZURE WAS CAUSED BY THE SIGHT OF A TENT."

And now my Attention was diverted to a great Number of Notice Boards that were fixed here and there in the River; and on one would be painted "Water and Fishing Private," and on another "DANGEROUS," and on still others "THAT WAY TO THE LOCK," and "Beware of the Weir," and many others; and I perceived that these Notices moved my Friend to a vast and most consuming Enjoyment of himself, in such wise that he fell to chuckling, until I feared he might be in Danger of another Seizure, but, perceiving my Alarm, he whispered me

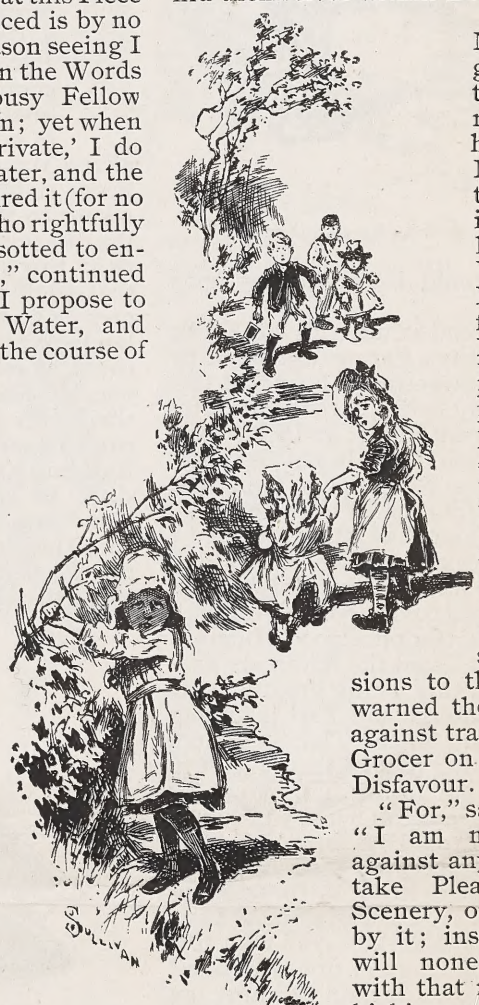
"THERE GOES, SIR, A VILLAIN."



"DANGEROUS."

in the Ear: "'Tis I that have set up these Notices, and you are to know that this Piece of Water in which they are placed is by no means mine, for the which Reason seeing I may hardly venture to set down the Words 'Private Water,' lest some busy Fellow would be challenging the Claim; yet when I say 'Water and Fishing Private,' I do but state the Fact that it *is* Water, and the Fishing is private, for I have hired it (for no consideration) of the Public, who rightfully own the Water but are too besotted to enforce their Claim. Next Year," continued the worthy old Gentleman, "I propose to stretch a Wire across this Water, and thereafter a stout Chain; so in the course of Years the Water shall become of right my private Property. In like wise the Words 'Dangerous,' and 'That Way to the Lock,' and 'Beware of the Weir,' are cunningly designed to hinder the vulgar from entering upon that Piece of Water; for you should know that, as there is no Danger, nor any Weir, so, also, either Way conducts to the Lock."

Delighting me with such pleasing Converse, as to which I was at a Loss, whether the more to admire the ingenious Wisdom, or the Christianlike Kindliness of so worthy a Man, the Proprietor led the Way to the Village of which he appeared to be the Owner—or, I would be saying, rather the Owner of the Villagers; being as one might say, like to a Slave-owner. And here I could not but observe with a pleasurable Emotion, how, as the Children ran from him with Affright, so likewise the Dogs snarled at his Approach and hid themselves within Doors.



"THE CHILDREN RAN FROM HIM WITH AFFRIGHT."

The good old Man made diligent Inquiries touching a Rumouring that had come to his Ear, how a certain Widow, being poor, had let her Room to a Visitor from London who was for spending a Holiday in the Place: and, finding this Rumouring to be true, presently notified her that she should quit her Cottage on the following Week; and also roundly rated a Grocer that would be supplying Provisions to the Intruder, and warned the other Villagers against trafficking with that Grocer on Penalty of great Disfavour.

"For," said the good Man, "I am most keenly set against any man coming to take Pleasure upon my Scenery, or upon the River by it; insomuch so that I will none of him;" and with that my Friend fell to kicking certain Children that

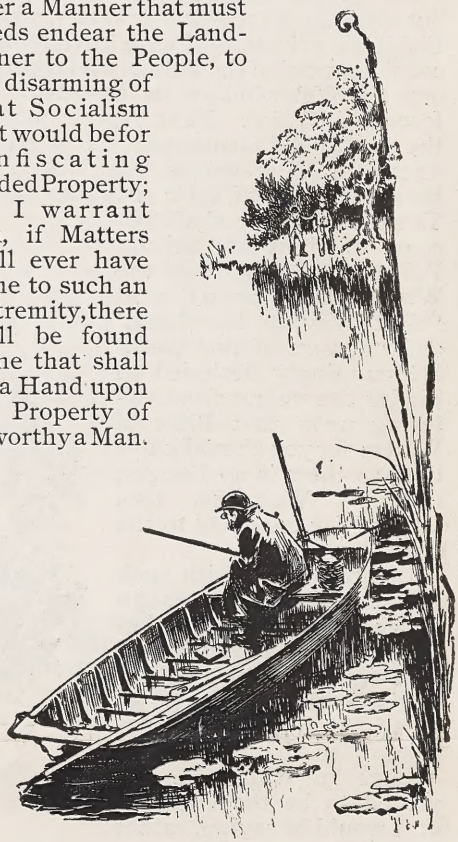
"HE ROUNDLY RATED A GROCER."

he suspected would be grimacing upon him.

Seeing my Friend salute with more than his usual Cordiality a Farmer that came by in a Gig, I was interested to hear that this Man was the only being in that Part after the Proprietor's own Heart; and this for the Reason that he would ever be putting some Despite upon his Neighbours (and that particularly such of them as were unable to retort upon him), and had lately invented a very quaint Conceit of driving quickly here and there in the midst of any Neighbour's fowls that he might come upon in his rough Meadows, and this for pure good Humour.

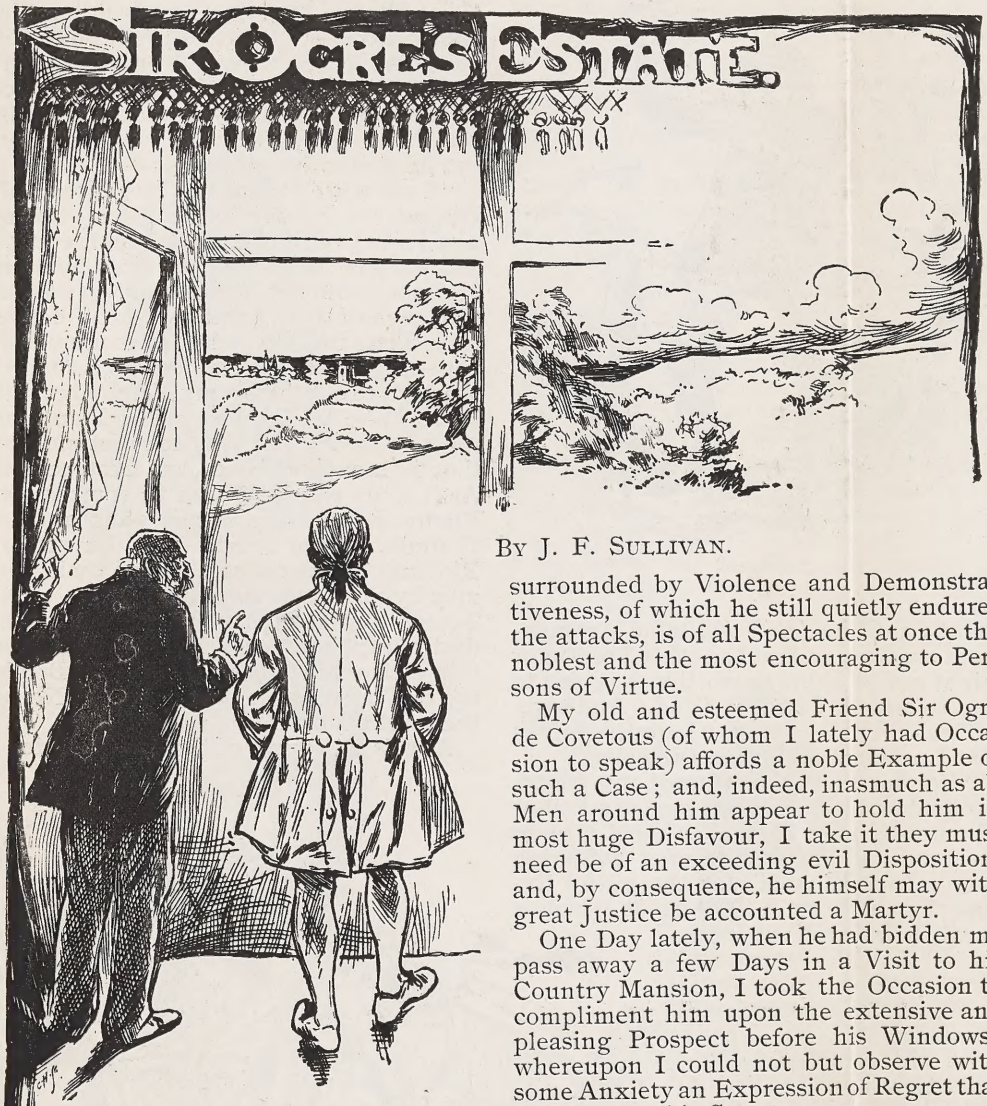
"And in short," said the Riverside Proprietor, "I do in this Thing greatly value myself, that (although this Part is among the most beautiful on the Thames), there come but few hither to take their Pleasure of the Scenery, nor to fish, nor camp, for Fear of me; for, being of more Substance than them that would be for doing so, I will always be frightening them from any maintaining of their Right by threatening to put upon them the Costs of a Suit at Law, which they can ill afford." And with this Sir Ogre made off at great Speed to point out to his Man how a certain Stranger lay a-fishing in a Punt over his River Bed.

No sooner had I taken leave of my good Friend than I fell into profound Speculation on the Blessing that our River enjoys in the having upon its Banks such a gentle Soul; and after so wonderful a Manner is the River dotted with Notice-boards, that I am come to an Opinion that there must be many Landowners almost as worthy as he; though, indeed, they do speak of a certain Landowner, not far from my Friend, that has devoted an Island for the Enjoyment of such as pass by, providing not only a Summer-house, and Tables, and a Landing Platform, but also a Hammock and, for that matter, great rustic Vases, which he causes his Gardener to tend, for the Good of others; which Thing must be a Cause of huge Diversion and Pleasantry to my Friend. I cannot conclude this Speculation without giving great Praise to the Wisdom of my old Friend in bearing himself after a Manner that must needs endear the Landowner to the People, to the disarming of that Socialism that would be for confiscating landed Property; for I warrant you, if Matters shall ever have come to such an Extremity, there shall be found None that shall lay a Hand upon the Property of so worthy a Man.



"A STRANGER LAY A-FISHING IN A PUNT."

PART II.—*The Queer Side of Landlordism.*



BY J. F. SULLIVAN.

I HAVE long been of a settled Conviction that an unfeigned and Sincere Abhorrence of Violence is among the most admirable Ornaments of a worthy Man; and even that it constitutes in itself so notable a Claim upon our Respect and Esteem as to pass for a Proof of Worth. The Spectacle of a peaceful and moderate Man surrounded by Violence and Demonstrativeness, of which he still quietly endures the attacks, is of all Spectacles at once the noblest and the most encouraging to Persons of Virtue.

My old and esteemed Friend Sir Ogre de Covetous (of whom I lately had Occasion to speak) affords a noble Example of such a Case; and, indeed, inasmuch as all Men around him appear to hold him in most huge Disfavour, I take it they must need be of an exceeding evil Disposition, and, by consequence, he himself may with great Justice be accounted a Martyr.

One Day lately, when he had bidden me pass away a few Days in a Visit to his Country Mansion, I took the Occasion to compliment him upon the extensive and pleasing Prospect before his Windows; whereupon I could not but observe with some Anxiety an Expression of Regret that passed upon his Countenance.

"I will not conceal from you," said he, "that there is for me in this Prospect no little Cause of Sorrow and Chagrin, seeing that, by Reason of its being Visible from my Windows, it ought naturally to belong to me; for I hold that, as a freehold Estate reaches by Law to the Centre of the Earth, so in like Manner it ought to extend in all directions over that Hemisphere, or Half of the Earth, of which it is the Central Point."

Upon my bringing to his Notice that this System would permit the whole Earth to accommodate but two Landed Proprietors, "Zounds!" quoth the good Knight,

"A TITLE."

"and a most just and equitable Arrangement surely, save that the other Proprietor might not be found so worthy as myself to own so large a Parcel of Land. And herein," said he reflectively, "I confess to you that I perceive a possible Difficulty."

"Yonder Field," continued my friend, "is held by a pestilent Baggage of a Fellow who must forsooth refuse to yield it up to me (and that in despite of it bordering upon a Field of mine) for the pitiful Excuse that he hath a Title to it which is hardly to be upset; and this for all I have repeatedly striven to drive him away by this and that underhand Means."

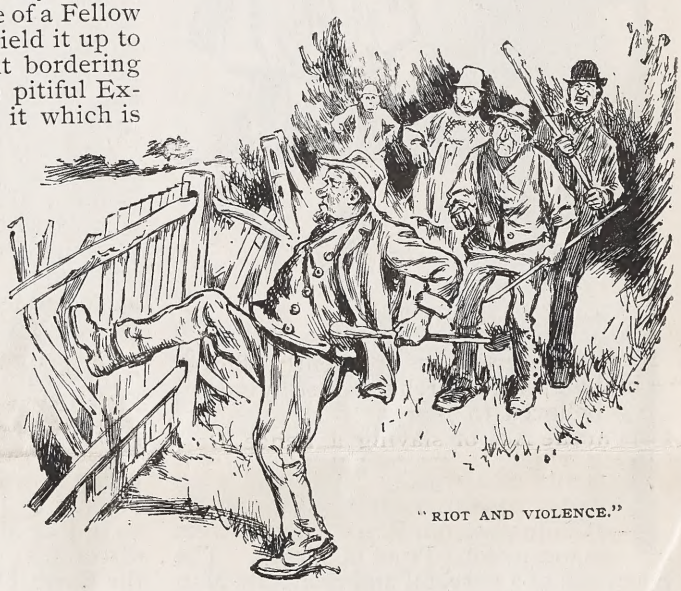
At this sorrowful Recollection my old Friend let fall so bitter a Tear that I was myself hardly put to it but I should weep in Concert; but at this Moment Sir Ogre continued:—

"But you must know that I am the most grievously put about by a set of knavious low Fellows that are called 'Commoners' and 'The Public,' that will ever be trying to hinder me appropriating such Parcels of unenclosed Land as I may have a Fancy for; and this under the lame Pretext that these Parcels are theirs by Law!

"As if, forsooth, the Law had been designed to protect the rights of Fellows that have no Money to spend on Lawsuits!" And at this the worthy Knight was moved to so severe a Taking-on that I feared he was like to be seized with an Apoplexy: but he presently continued:—

"I am myself a Man of a most Peaceable Disposition (having indeed been selected as a Justice of the Peace on that account), and have no Desire but to live quietly in Harmony with my Neighbours, appropriating such of their Land as I may desire, from Time to Time, to possess myself of; yet—so pestilent a Perverseness is there in the Nature of others—my Neighbours will in no Wise be favouring this Plan; but must be for ever striving to resist me, and that with open Violence, and Destruction! As it is my earnest Desire to compass the Enclosure of their Lands after a quiet Fashion, to the avoiding of all unseemly Riot and Violence, so they of their part may by no means be persuaded to a like Temperateness of Demeanour, but will be destroying the Fences I have put up; and this with a most unseemly noise of Breaking of Timber, which is to me of all Noises the most abhorrent."

At this Discourse of the good old Man I



"RIOT AND VIOLENCE."

fell into a profound, curious Speculation upon the Difference between him that constructs, and him that destroys; and very hugely to the Disadvantage of this Latter; seeing that Construction (that is, the Devoting of our human Skill to the Formation of useful Products from those Materials with which the Beneficence of Nature has provided us), is at all Times a laudable Work; while the Undoing of these Products

"SIR OGRE'S ANCESTOR."

is but a deplorable Retrogression toward Savagery. Thus I hold that he who constructs is ever more worthy than is he who destroys; and by Consequence the Encloser (or Constructor of Fences), than the rightful Owner (or Destroyer of Fences).

Sir Ogre himself has frequently shown me in the Parish Church a stained Window that is believed to represent an Ancestor of his in the Act of slaying a Fence Destroyer; which seems to put me in the Right.

I was aroused from this Speculation by Sir Ogre's inviting me to take a Walk with him upon the Pieces of Land which he had lately added to his Property; and I was filled with Admiration at the Ingenuity with which his Operations were carried on. "For," said he, with that humorous Twinkle in his Eye which is the Sign or Patent of a good Man in those Moments when he feels that he has done his Duty to himself, "you must know that I will often be sending one of my Fellows on an obscure Night to fix a low Wire along the Ground where I propose to afterward erect a Fence; and this for the Reason, that I hold it wiser to carry on the Work which I have set myself with as little Fuss and Ostentation as may be possible; being unwilling to provoke in the Commoners that deplorable Resentment and Anger which the Sight of my Operations in actual Progress would be calling forth."

I here fell into a profound and improving Speculation upon the evident Worth of a Man who displays so delicate a Consideration for others, that he is of a Mind to avoid the setting before them any Temptation to an Outbreak of those violent Passions which must always be so harmful to Themselves. I was awakened from this Reverie by falling suddenly into a deep Ditch full of Mire, by reason of having tripped over one of Sir Ogre's Wires; the good old Man being at this so mightily diverted that he was fain to

"ONE OF SIR OGRE'S WIRES."

leave me with but my Heels sticking up out of the Mud for some ten Minutes while he enjoyed his Laugh.

My attention was now called to a Company of rough Fellows that had fallen to upon a new Fence near at Hand which my old Friend had lately put up; whereat Sir Ogre very properly requested a Constable that was passing to take his Note-book and jot down upon it the Names of these Fellows; and, upon my inquiring of the Course which he purposed to take in regard to them, he addressed to me the following Words:—

"SIR OGRE REQUESTED A CONSTABLE TO TAKE HIS NOTE-BOOK."

"It's my Purpose to carry these pestilent Knaves and most impudent Ruffians before the Bench of Justices at Brentford: for you must know that these Fellows are within their legal Rights in what they now do; but these good Justices of Brentford have so nice and subtile a Sense of Logic, that they will, for all they must needs acquit the Defendants of all Offence, yet put upon them a fine for the Offence which they have not committed; by which means these Brentford Justices have acquired a very favourable high Reputation among all Men of Sense."

At this I fell into a most deep pleasing Speculation upon the wisdom of these Brentford Justices, who indeed—however it may seem to the ignorant and thoughtless—carry out the very Spirit of our Laws: for the Purpose of all our Laws is that Men shall put an Action the one on the other, and pay the Costs of it; he that shall be able to pay more Costs than his Fellows being adjudged in the Right: wherefore it is reasonable and fitting that One who hath broken a Fence, and is adjudged in the Right in so doing, shall pay for it by way of a Testimony or Sign that he *is* in the Right. For as a Man cannot be adjudged in the Right except he pay; so he that pays not must surely be in the Wrong; which no Man would desire to be.

We now began to come at every Turn upon this or that Company of lewd Fellows that would be engaged either in tearing up a Wire that Sir Ogre had planted; or in breaking down a Fence; or in pulling down some Notice-Board of his that warned all and sundry from passing by that Way, or advertising a Piece of Land to be let on building Leases: and all this at Times with no little Stir and Clamour and cracking of Woodwork. Nay, I marked a certain Group that had made a Bonfire of some Notice-Boards; and these Fellows had the Effrontery to invite the good Knight to warm himself by it, with unfitting Sarcasm: all of which I could perceive caused my old Friend no slight Dudgeon. "But it will

"A BONFIRE OF NOTICE BOARDS."

go hard," said he, "but they shall smart for it properly!"

I could not but admire the Industry of this worthy Man, that had gotten together so large an Estate at so small Outlay; for Sir Ogre assured me that he had inherited from his Father but a Field of ten Acres in those Parts, having acquired the other ten thousand Acres by a sedulous and unflagging Pursuit of the Plan I have described, without so much as purchasing a Foot of it.

I was much interested in watching the Result of a Charge that had been preferred against a certain Fellow that was notorious in the Neighbourhood for unseemly Resistance at Law against those that possessed more Money than himself, and so were in the Right.

'THIS FELLOW HAD TAKEN A RABBIT."

It seemed that this Fellow had taken a Rabbit upon a Piece of public Land but lately enclosed by Sir Ogre. On this Fellow being brought up before Sir Ogre and charged with this Offence, I was taken with a great Admiration for my Friend's Freedom from Bias, and great Desire to do Justice; for he would by no Means hear a Word of what the Defendant had to say, fearing that in the Flurry of the Position he might haply incriminate himself still more deeply, but dealt with the Case summarily, passing upon the Fellow no harder Sentence than one Year with hard Labour; which, I take it, was but a slight Punishment to undergo, for a low Fellow that had no means.

That Night there was a great To-Do in the Village hard by; for there was to be a Burning of an image or *Effigies* of the good Knight, upon the Pretext that he had put up a Barrier upon a Path that had been a public Way for Centuries; where upon Sir Ogre lost no time in having the Fellows locked up for Causing an Obstruction: "For," says he, "the Roads and Ways are intended for the Public to pass along them; and this proper Use of them is not to be hindered by this or that Rascal that hath a mind to turn them to his own Devices."

Such is ever the Modesty of Sir Ogre, that he is by no Means of a Mind to make a Figure in his neighbourhood; and, indeed, he protested to me when on the Subject of the burning of the *Effigies*, that the making of a Figure is to him a Matter of Abhorrence.

I am now content to leave the Reputation of the good old Knight in the hands of the Public; being of a most certain Conviction that, whatever the Voice of Slander may be inclined to speak of it, it can in no way suffer Deterioration.